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Farm Broadcasters Letter

United States Department of Agriculture Office of Public Affairs Radio-TV Division Washington D.C. 20250 (202) 447-4330

Letter No. 2448

Feb. 16, 1990

TREE PLANTING INITIATIVE -- Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter, along with Texaco President & CEO James W. Kinnear and American Forestry Assoc. Exec. VP R. Neil Sampson announced an urban tree-planting initiative on Valentine's Day. Texaco and the Texaco Philanthropic Foundation will provide \$1 million in the first year to support tree-planting projects in Houston, Denver & New Orleans this spring and additional locations in the fall. Contact: Kelly Shipp (202) 447-4623.

FLOATING ROOTS -- A USDA scientist is growing carrot roots in beakers to try to unlock the secrets of natural soil fungi that help many kinds of plants grow. The payoff, perhaps five to ten years away, would be a cheaper way to mass-produce fungi as farmers' and nursery operators' underground allies, says Plant Physiologist Sui-Sheng (Sylvia) T. Hua. Hua says the self-sustaining roots are ideal for her research because she grows them without bothering with soil or carrots. "I can focus on just the root and the fungus," she says. Contact: Sui-Sheng Hua (415) 559-5905.

GOOD NEWS FOR FERRET LOVERS -- USDA has made ferret fans happy by approving a rabies vaccine for the weasel-like mammals. Because ferrets have a reputation for biting and previously could not be protected from rabies, public health authorities considered them a public menace and some states have made it illegal to keep them. David Espeseth, a USDA veterinarian says the vaccine was previously approved for cats, dogs, cattle & swine. He says public health officials may still order a ferret killed and tested for rabies even if it has had the shot. Contact: David Espeseth (301) 436-8245.

GEARING UP FOR THE FARM BILL -- One aspect of new legislation to replace the 1985 farm bill is food assistance programs. A new USDA publication takes a look at options for food assistance policy in the next decade. Food assistance is influenced by two conflicting priorities -- containing costs and improving nutritional status, say J. William Levedahl & Masao Matsumoto, the authors. Source: "U.S. Domestic Food Assistance Programs, Lessons from the Past." Contact: Levedahl & Matsumoto on (202) 786-1864.

FOOD CHOICES EXPAND -- During 1989 consumers were offered a record 9,200 new food items -- including 1,700 more food-enhancing condiments. Sauces, flavoring and pickles with Cajun, Jamaican, Thai & Creole flavors challenged the dominant Italian, Mexican and Chinese offerings, says Donna Montgomery of the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service. There were more than 1,300 new snacks and candies, 1,348 new dairy items, almost 1,200 new bakery items (many with oat bran) and many entrees offering low-fat, low-salt, low-cholesterol choices. Contact: Donna Montgomery (504) 388-4141.

BALANCING WORK & FAMILY LIFE -- Cornell University Cooperative Extension has a series of fact sheets, "Balancing Work and Family Life," to help today's families better manage their time & money. Series Coordinator Christiann Dean, says the series is designed to help busy employed parents understand how today's rapid changes affect their families, discover how others handle these challenges and find a balance to suit their own needs. Contact: Carol Doolittle (607) 255-7660.

WATER QUALITY PROJECTS -- USDA will establish water quality demonstration projects in California, Florida, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Texas and Wisconsin this year. Sec. Yeutter says the project goal is to demonstrate cost-effective agricultural practices that can be used and shared by farmers, the agribusiness community and federal, state and local policy makers. Contact: Diana Morse (202) 447-4772.

DON'T BUY SMUGGLED BIRDS -- If you're buying an exotic bird -- hookbilled or yellow-naped Amazon are the most popular -- make sure you don't buy one that's been smuggled into the country. Every year from January through early spring hundreds of exotic birds enter the U.S. illegally after the winter breeding season. "These smuggled birds often carry such diseases as exotic Newcastle without showing symptoms," says James W. Glosser, administrator of USDA's Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service. Exotic Newcastle virus is deadly to all birds and would be a major problem for the poultry industry. Contact: Pat El-Hinnawy (301) 436-7255.

THE CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM will boost net farm income & improve environmental quality over the life of the program. However, these gains will come at the cost of somewhat higher food prices and government administrative expenses, according to a new USDA study. There may also be potential downturns in farm input industries. Net economic benefits of the program range between \$3.4 billion & \$11 billion in present value, according to estimates in the report. Source: "The Conservation Reserve Program, an Economic Assessment." Contact: C. Edwin Young & C. Tim Osborn (202) 786-1840.

HERE'S A GOOD WAY TO FIND OUT WHO WORKS WHERE -- Sue Kirchoff, whose picture was featured prominently on the cover of last week's Farm Broadcaster's Letter along with Sec. Yeutter, is not a reporter for Knight-Ridder. Since August of 1989, she has been a commodities correspondent for Reuters. We regret the error.

FROM OUR RADIO SERVICE

AGRICULTURE USA #1706 -- Brenda Curtis presents the Bush Administration's Farm Bill proposal in a nutshell, with comments from Sec. Clayton Yeutter. (Weekly reel -- 13-1/2 min. documentary.)

CONSUMER TIME #1188 -- Getting enough vitamin D; disposing of hazardous products; a tree planting proposal; microwave ovens -- agents of change; rice is still nice. (Weekly reel of 2-1/2 - 3 min. consumer features.)

AGRITAPE NEWS & FEATURES #1695 -- Soviets buying more wheat; cotton payments; Florida's tomato crop; a tree planting proposal. (Weekly reel of news features.)

NEWS FEATURE FIVE #1307 -- Biocontrol of hydrilla; camel cotton; food intake & disease immunity; parasitic nematodes; hairy sugar cane. (Weekly reel of research features.)

UPCOMING ON USDA RADIO NEWSLINE -- Wed., Feb. 21, crop/weather update, catfish production; Thurs., Feb. 22, livestock/poultry outlook; Fri., Feb. 23, feed yearbook summary, U.S. livestock update; Mon., Feb. 26, cotton/wool outlook; Tues., Feb. 27, export outlook, crop/weather update; Wed., Feb. 28, ag prices, world tobacco situation; Tues., March 6, crop/weather update; Fri., March 9, U.S. crop production, world ag supply & demand; Mon., March 12, vegetable outlook, world ag/grain production, world oilseed situation, world cotton situation.

DIAL THE USDA RADIO NEWSLINE (202) 488-8353 or 8359.
Material changed at 5 p.m. EST each working day.

FROM OUR TELEVISION NEWS SERVICE
(Week of Feb. 12)

FEATURES -- Pat O'Leary looks at USDA's 1989 crop quality reports for wheat, corn & soybeans; Lynn Wyvill reports on the progress of "Europe 1992;" Debbie Janifer profiles the "Beagle Brigade," cute canines who keep contraband from coming into the country.

ACTUALITIES -- Sec. Yeutter comments on the latest USDA crop report, prospects for a new Soviet grain deal & citrus damage in Texas & Florida; USDA Grain Analyst Donald Novotny on Soviet buys of U.S. grain; USDA Chief Meteorologist Norton Strommen on farmbelt weather patterns; USDA's Outlook Board Chairman James Donald on the latest world ag supply & demand; USDA Veterinarian Lonnie King on salmonella emergency.

NEXT WEEK -- A pilot program in Baltimore, Md., to use plastic "benefit cards" to get food stamps and other benefits to eligible clients; USDA's America the Beautiful program; cotton farmers' best friend; Chilean fruit imports.

Available on satellite Westar IV, audio 6.2 or 6.8:

THURSDAY 7:30-7:45 p.m., EST, Transponder 12D
SATURDAY 10:30-11:15 a.m., EST, Transponder 10D
MONDAY 8:30-9:15 a.m., EST, Transponder 12D
(Repeat of Saturday transmission)

OFFMIKE

EVEN...though prices were low last year, the fields got enough moisture and yields were good, says Stephen Dingels (KLGR, Redwood Falls, Minn.). That meant farmers bought equipment. Stephen says his local John Deere dealer ranked as one of the top ten in the nation. This year, as last, producers are confronting low subsoil conditions. But, most Minnesota snow arrives in March so farmers are still optimistic.

EQUIPMENT...is not moving in Dink Embry's (WHOP, Hopkinsville, Ky.) region. Most producers are cautious, including adopting low-input techniques. Dink says farmers are interested in learning more about it, but not ready to take action yet. Aquaculture is growing there. Congratulations to Dink and WHOP. The station recently celebrated its 50th anniversary, and Dink has been there covering farm news for 44 years.

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Washington, D.C. 20250-1300

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SOUTHWEST...citrus producers are looking forward to a good year because of the Florida freeze, says George Gatley (Western Agri-Radio Networks, Yuma, Ariz.). Asparagus harvest is underway and vegetable production has been helped by good weather -- it was 82 degrees outside George's studio when we spoke. Recent rain -- three-year's supply in two weeks -- caused flooding. In nearby California's lower San Joaquin Valley, they're rationing water, George says. Reservoirs are very low and the snow-rain season ends in April.

THANKS...to Charles Youngs (KLBJ, Austin, Texas) for taking the time to write and tell us about how he uses USDA's daily and weekly radio services. Sure made the staff's day.

Vic Powell
VIC POWELL
Chief, Radio & TV Division

